



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
February 2, 2007
Community Boating, Boston, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Chairman Dick Cross, Councilors Julian Agyeman, Christina Crowley, Whitney Hatch, Laura Johnson, Henry Lee, John Natoli, and Dan Wolf.

Public Attendees: Dick Miller, Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee; Jen Roy, The Esplanade Association; Jen Baker, MASSPIRG; Mike Ryan, Friends of the Fells; Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Tom Philbin, Conservation and Recreation Campaign; Evan Moss, Charles River Conservancy; and Nan Finkenaar, Friends of Georgetown Rowley State Forest.

DCR Staff in Attendance: Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis, Acting Chief of Staff Stephanie Cooper, Tracy Lawrence, Karst Hooeboom, Tom LaRosa, Ron Cameron, Pat Flynn, Ken Foley, Marianne Fleckner, Leslie Luchonok, Tom Hustis, Nikki Belmonte, Joe Rotondo and Mike Tognarelli.

I. Call To Order (1:10 p.m.), Chairman Cross

- a. Chairman Cross reconfirmed three *Strategic Goals* which are: to have an agency capable of delivering world class conservation and recreation services; to demonstrate progress towards world class parks; and to generate public appreciation and support for the resources we manage.
- b. Chairman Cross was contacted by members of the legislative Parks Caucus including Rep. Rush, Sen. Resor, and Rep. Smizik to discuss how the Council operates. Chairman Cross discussed the Council's involvement in strategy, policy and fiscal administration. There was a high level of interest in maintaining dialogue between the Caucus leaders and the Council.

II. Commissioner's Report, Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis

- a. Acting Commissioner Geigis described the three themes the Senior Staff developed to guide DCR through the transition: (1) Proactive Public Engagement/Customer Service/Communications; (2) Professionalism; and (3) Effective Management and Service Delivery.
- b. The Winter Storm Management Plan was delivered to the legislature. One significant change is the MOU with MHD outlining their commitment to clearing 63% of DCR parkways. Priority Areas of snow and ice removal are identified on a public GIS map on the DCR website. Giving 100% of parkway clearing to MHD is supported by Secretary.
- c. Currently, the RMP program has 1.5 planners (one splits time with the MEPA program) and a newly hired GIS specialist. A third planner will be coming on board and recently another planner position was posted. Projects are underway at Mt. Watatic, Beaver Brook Reservation (will be submitted to Council by June), Leominster State Forest and Stonybrook Reservation. The Wachusett Mountain update is temporarily on hold. There is a \$75K joint initiative with Natural Heritage to develop rare species data collection and guidelines.
- d. The rehabilitation contract of the 13.7-mile Greylock road was signed for \$14M. The road will reopen in June 2009. DCR has developed a "Discovering the Berkshire Highlands" brochure to promote other DCR properties in the area.
- e. The legislature filed a bill to create a Metro Beaches Fund to collect revenue from urban beaches, create an advisory board and create a nonprofit group to develop programming.
- f. DCR will undergo two initiatives for spring: Great Ideas for Spring and the Great Parks Pursuit. Great Ideas will focus on park improvements especially in Urban Parks. Work schedules and maintenance standards will be developed, and park supervisors are encouraged to come up with creative ideas within their budget for visitor enhancements. DCR will launch the Great Parks

Pursuit for 6 weeks with NH and CT on May 19. Families will participate in environmental education programs and games at different DCR facilities during those 8 weeks.

Councilor Lee asked how the themes will help improve the reputation of DCR being unresponsive to the public. Acting Commissioner Geigis stated that one of DCR's goals to be proactive with customer service and DCR is developing a system to be more responsive especially in correspondence. DCR is also working on being more proactive.

III. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules

a. Finance Committee, *Whitney Hatch*

- i. The Committee reported that DCR is working on how to distribute personnel expenses and how to identify where exactly each job is located.
- ii. The gap analysis project scope of work and key issues were discussed, including the importance of performance standards against which current levels of service can be measured. DCR needs to further develop its standards and work toward applying them across the system to generate verifiable data on parks and their conditions. The need to continue to standardize information collection so that cohesive data is available and comparable across the agency was also discussed. The Committee would like to discuss general performance standards with the Council. Once standards are more fully defined, the gap between the standard and the actual can be measured. More detailed standards for different types of facilities can be developed after general standards are established. Councilor Lee emphasized that current and future park use should be considered. In the process, benchmarks will stratify the goals. This discussion will be put on the agenda for a meeting in the coming months.
- iii. Regarding the budget process, DCR submitted a budget at FY07 funding levels (\$88.7M) plus 1% for maintenance budget in October under Romney's guidelines, proposing more money for new parks from the savings from the Urban Park rinks. One-time earmarks were eliminated and money was reserved for other purposes such as annualizing hiring, State Park retained revenue increase by \$1M, \$1.5M for more contractors in Urban Parks, skilled trade employees, and non-capital equipment needs. The current administration asked for 10% cuts to the proposed spending plan. DCR focused on one-time earmarks, non-mission activities such as snow and ice removal and dam safety, timing and deployment of personnel, and long term rink leases – totaling \$7.6M. JN resources and tools are becoming available. Councilor Hatch offered to draft a letter to the Secretary to be sent before the H1 budget is announced at the end of February.

b. Policy Committee, *Julian Agyeman*

- i. The Policy Committee will reviewing the Historic Parkways policy on February 13 with DCR and hope to come back to the Council on March 2.
- ii. The Off-Highway Vehicle policy will be presented today. The Committee thought this policy followed a model process.

c. Resource Management Plan Committee, *Henry Lee*

- i. The Committee will discuss what can be done effectively with less staff and will review the two pilot RMPs in early March.
- ii. Councilor Johnson still questions how everything fits together; which RMPS are funded and from what resources? There were a series of discussions between the planning department and Steve Burrington, but results from conversation were not reported. Chairman Cross asked Acting Commissioner Geigis to report back.

IV. **Motorized Trail Recreation Facility Assessment Policy, Gary Briere**

- a. Mr. Briere, Chief of the Bureau of Recreation, gave a slide presentation that summarized what an OHV is and the process for policy development. He stated that recent use in MA is ~85K vehicles.
- b. Currently DCR allows OHV access at 7 properties, but poor design and lack of maintenance has created unstable natural areas and unsafe conditions.
- c. The OHV working group developed a three-pronged approach towards a comprehensive OHV policy: (1) Criteria for identifying legal and appropriate areas to ride (presented today) (2) enforcement and (3) education. Once today's policy is approved, next steps will be to apply the criteria to the 7 properties and identify changes to make for the 2007 riding season, work with stakeholders on timeline for further changes, draft changes to MA regulations and several chapters, and use working group to develop an education plan.
- d. Currently registration fees go to the Environmental Police who help DCR with patrols since our rangers cannot enforce at the same level.
- e. Several Councilors stated their concern for the lack of proper enforcement and funding at the time of application of the facility assessment criteria. Other concerns included emission standards, on-site medical help, noise, wildlife impacts and liability to the state. It was recommended that the Facility Assessment Policy be conditionally approved for 6 months with the following language and Mr. Briere would return to the August 2 meeting: *"The motion is for the Council to approve Motorized Trail Recreation Facility Assessment Policy for six months conditional on the delivery of and approval by the Council of a complete OHV program including an enforcement plan that addresses impacts on unauthorized use and a plan for funding."* 7 in favor, 1 not in favor (Councilor Wolf).

V. **Open Discussion among Council Members** (topics of interest for future meetings) - postponed

VI. **Approval of Minutes from 11/30/06 Meeting** – All in favor

VII. **Public Comment**

- a. Dick Miller of the Cochituate State Park Advisory Council thanked the Council for making a difference. He reported that one of the Solar Bees in Lake Cochituate drifted away and still hasn't been roped back in. He also brought attention to possible development on the Old Mill property at the S. Natick Dam on the Charles River by James M. Knott.
- b. Heidi Ricci of Mass Audubon encouraged the Council to consider possibilities of other funding resources as identified by the Conservation and Recreation Campaign.
- c. Jen Roy of the Esplanade Association and Evan Moss of the Charles River Conservancy invited the Council to the 8th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup on April 21.
- d. Nan Finkenaur of the Friends of Georgetown Rowley stated her appreciation for the rigor of OHV working group.

Meeting adjourned 3:40 pm